

Mr. President, I yield the floor, but I indicate I do want to speak as in morning business at some time after the majority leader speaks to pay tribute to our former colleague, Senator Cranston.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, point of clarification: Senator BINGAMAN was not suggesting that he would speak immediately after Senator LOTT; is that correct?

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, in deference to the other people who are here and waiting, I will certainly wait until they conclude their statements.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the majority leader.

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Senator from New Mexico for offering to yield time earlier.

Mr. President, I ask that my time be taken from my leader time so it will not count against the time that was made available for this debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

EDUCATION

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, we have a new President of the United States who has proven in his own State of Texas and in his life—and with the encouragement of his wife—that he really cares about education and that he means it when he says we should leave no child behind.

We need an education system in America that is focused on one thing, and that is children learning. I am convinced he means that. I have had occasion to hear him talk about that in Texas, on the campaign trail, after the election, and even yesterday in the first meeting, when the bicameral Republican leadership met with the President, that was his focus. He made it clear he was going to reach out to the Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, and to outsiders to try to get a consensus as to how we want to move our country. But the issue he focused on was education.

I believe that is going to be well received by the American people. People of all backgrounds, races, creeds, color, regions know that for continued advancement for the American culture, education and improving education is absolutely critical.

He continues to focus on this issue. This morning he met with the leaders of the appropriate committees to talk about his proposal that he is going to send to us today. I have spoken to a couple of those who attended that meeting, including Senator JEFFORDS. A moment ago, when the Senator from Vermont, the chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, spoke, I felt there was an exuberance in him about the fact that this President is opening his administration the way he said he would, and in the Senate we are picking up that mantle. The bill that will carry the number S. 1 is going to be about education.

Today the President of the United States will keep his promise to America's schoolchildren. He will articulate for the Nation a vision of America, a public school system that serves the children and leaves no child behind.

I think it is important also that he is not going to send us a bill drafted with every word, every dot and comma, but he is going to lay out the provisions, the major points he intends to pursue, and he is asking us to pursue it legislatively in the Congress.

Under President Bush, our public schools can and will be doorways to opportunity. In Texas, he has proven that every child, particularly our disadvantaged children, can excel. As President, he will bring that same determination to all of our Nation's children.

The President proposed we apply commonsense principles to promote results. He also has picked an outstanding nominee to be Secretary of Education, and now he is the Secretary of Education, Dr. Rod Paige. By the way, I should note he is a native Mississippian. He grew up with a very blue-collar upbringing. He attended public schools. He got a good education. He was the head coach at Jackson State University in Jackson, MS, a university that has produced some outstanding academic leaders and athletic leaders in this country. Some of the most outstanding football players in the history of this country came out of Jackson State University.

He went beyond that. He got his postgraduate degrees. He got his doctorate, and then he went to the Houston, TX, school system, a school system that had all kinds of problems, that was deteriorating, declining, and he said: We are going to make this place work. We are going to provide different ideas, innovative ideas, and he produced results. Now he is going to be the Nation's Secretary of Education. Here again is a man who has shown the American dream is alive and well. When you look at his humble beginnings and what he did in terms of getting an education in public schools, at Jackson State University, and then getting his postdoctorate degrees and now is Secretary of Education, it is a tremendous testament to what can be done.

Our schools should be measured by what our children learn. I have said on this floor many times that I am the son of a schoolteacher, a lady who taught school for 19 years. I am very proud of it. She still corrects my grammar when I use the wrong word, the wrong tense in my weekly columns or when she hears me speak. If I speak improperly, she will mark my paper in red or chastise me. I am proud of that.

Unfortunately, like a lot of teachers, after 14 years she left and went into bookkeeping and even radio announcing because she could make more money. That is a tragedy, too. At the local and State level, we have to make sure we pay our people a livable wage so they will stay in teaching and not

go out into other places and get more money but maybe not much reward in terms of what they actually produce.

I went to public schools all my life. So did my wife and so did my children. I remember distinctly the best teachers I ever had in my life were my teachers in the second, third, and fourth grades at Duck Hill, MS. Those teachers affected my life. They taught me the basics. They taught me to read.

By the way, I stayed in touch with two of the three all my life. One of them now is deceased. One of them I still hear from every now and then. They came from a small poor school, but they made a difference in my whole life, more than my college professors, more than my high school teachers.

We have to make sure we have that for every child in America.

No child—no child—in America should be trapped in failing schools just because they lack the economic means to have a choice or to make sure they do get a good education.

We have to be prepared to think outside the box. What we have been doing is not working in every school. Some schools are fantastic. In my own State, we have some great schools. We have students who make tremendous test scores on the ACT and SAT, and yet we have schools where children are just not getting a quality education. They are not learning. They are not safe. They are in danger from all kinds of things in these schools. So we have to keep the good ones good and make them even better, but we have to make sure those other schools can be brought up. That is a local responsibility, a State responsibility.

But, yes, the Federal Government has a role to play. There are many things we can do to be helpful in that area. The President's proposals will help us address that. The fact that he is willing to put money—and a significant amount of money—into children learning to read, that is a beginning, that is where it all starts.

We have one couple in my State of Mississippi who have been remarkably successful in their lives: Jim Barksdale and his wife Sally, from Jackson, MS. They went to the University of Mississippi. Jim Barksdale worked with FedEx. He worked with McCaw Telephone in Washington State. He is one of the founders of Netscape who made a lot of money, and now he is on the board of AOL Time Warner. He and his wife just gave \$100 million—\$100 million—of personal money, the two of them, for one thing, and only one thing, in my State—4th grade reading. The State said, OK, can we join in on this? And others said, no, we want this to be focused on teaching those 4th grade students to read. That is the kind of thing happening with individuals in the private sector. They have a responsibility to help with education, too.

So we need to really build on that. Parents have a right to hold schools to high standards and know that their

schools are meeting those high standards. Our children excel when they are exposed to basics, going back to the points I made about reading. Our early childhood programs should focus on reading first, and we should not be afraid to measure those programs to make sure they are succeeding and not merely just good-intentioned programs that do not produce results.

Also, character counts. There is a program called Character Counts in America. I think we need to incorporate that in how we teach. We should never shy away from teaching that basic lesson to our students.

These basic principles work. They have worked in Texas, they have worked in other parts of the country, and they have formed the cornerstone of the President's education initiatives.

Under Governor Bush, African American 4th grade students have made the largest gains in the country in math and science. In fact, they had the highest test scores in their peer group of any State in the Nation. Hispanic students have made similar gains, scoring second highest of Hispanics in all States. We can and should do the same thing for all of America's children.

The President's education plan is based on a simple premise: Those who know our children best—parents, teachers, and principals—should determine how to prioritize our education dollars. The needs in rural America are often left out, and they are quite different from those in our cities. It makes sense that local schools have the freedom to design programs that meet individual needs. The compulsion in Washington has always been to have one size that fits all which they dictate from Washington.

What is needed in Pascagoula, my hometown, is obviously, on its face, different from what they need in Pittsburgh, PA. So we need that local flexibility, that local control, and with accountability that goes along with it. In exchange for that freedom, the President proposes to hold States accountable for the one thing that matters, and that is to make sure our children are learning.

There are many special interests in education. Many of them will raise their voices against the President's plan. They will use tactics to try to distract from what we are trying to accomplish by advocating other things and new programs. I think we need to go with what works and to make sure the only interests that matter are the interests of our children and that they are learning.

I believe this commonsense approach will form the kind of principles that can improve our education in America. I believe we can, in this area, reach bipartisan agreement. We tried mightily last year, and there was a lot of effort across the aisle from our education leaders, good men such as Paul Coverdell, who is not with us, and Slade Gorton, who will not be serving in the Sen-

ate. JOE LIEBERMAN was involved in that effort. We can have Republicans and Democrats who can come together on this because what President Bush is proposing is not Republican or Democrat; it is what has worked and what will work.

So I invite my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, let's engage in this issue. Let's move this bill. I hope the HELP Committee will have the necessary hearings to think about what we are going to do, but do not delay. Do not delay. Every day that goes by that we do not act in this area, another child is not getting the education he or she needs. They are in a school that is not safe or a school that is drug infested.

This could be one of the most exciting things we do in the next 2 years. I appreciate the fact that the President has shown his commitment. He is going to be dogged. He is going to be focused. We are going to get this done. And the children will be the beneficiaries now, and the country will be the beneficiaries for years to come.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Chair recognizes the Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, let me join in the bipartisan chorus of voices here on the floor this morning speaking about education reform and the package that President Bush will be sending us for our examination and consideration in the coming days. I say a chorus of bipartisan voices. Every Senator who serves in the Senate recognizes and is willing to dedicate time to the importance of education in our Nation, and especially to the improvement of our public educational system.

Are there differences? Sure, there are differences. Historically, many of our colleagues simply wanted to send money, wanted to send it down from the Federal level, arguing that money was the problem; that if enough was sent, it would resolve the issue. A good many of us have said: Now, wait a moment. There has to be some control and some measurement, some evaluation of achievement. Or is the money being spent in the right way? Is enough control being given at the State and local level?

Over the years, while the Federal Government has participated, it really has participated in a fairly limited way in the public education systems of our country. For every dollar that is spent on the ground in Idaho or Mississippi or Texas or Illinois, only about 7 or 8 cents of that dollar has been a Federal amount.

What George Bush brings to us today is an attempt to recognize what most Americans have already recognized and spoke to him about in the campaign. That is that our educational system is in need of improvement and in need of reform. And probably out of opinions from that side of the aisle and this side of the aisle, there is a strong common ground to allow that kind of improvement and reform to go forward.

For the last decade, the chorus has not necessarily been here, but it has been broad and across America where our citizens have been saying: Something is wrong; our children are not achieving at the levels they should. They are not safe in their schools. There is a level of disruption that does not produce the kind of environment where quality education can go forward.

Hopefully, in the days to come, we will be able to craft a package, working with our President, to achieve what most Americans want for their children, recognizing, as all of us do, that in the absence of a high-quality public education system, the very character of our Nation, that must be perpetuated and brought forward from generation to generation, begins to lose. If that happens, America loses. In the end, we are a lesser nation because our children—our young people and our future leaders—are simply not as prepared as they must be to compete amongst themselves and to compete in the world as we know it.

That is the issue George Bush challenges us with today. He speaks of putting money in for reading, but he also speaks of accountability. He turns that accountability back to the States and to the local communities and says: Prove your worth and we will help you. Good schools will improve and bad schools will work to improve, but for bad schools that will not recognize their failing, we will give parents and students the option to move elsewhere.

Now, public education is a monopoly. It always has been one. Many of the educators within that system want to keep it just that way. They do not want to have to measure up against the private sector or another school down the road. If you live in that school district, you are required to attend that school. What George Bush is saying is, not necessarily. So you do not have to be a prisoner within the educational system. If the educational system is going to educate, then the parent and the student—if they are not getting the quality of education they want—ought to be allowed and ought to be given the means to move to another school where that quality education exists.

Of course, there will also be consequences for success, not just for failure. If schools improve overall student achievement, they will be rewarded with special grants and bonuses.

Other key components of this plan will go a long way towards improving our schools. These components include increases in federal funding for literacy programs, the strengthening of math and science education, and the cutting of bureaucracy to make it easier for schools to upgrade their technology.

This bill would also help the States improve education by giving them more freedom in administering federal education dollars.

Federal education programs will be consolidated, thus reducing the red tape and allowing more flexibility at the local level.

President Bush's proposal also expands the amount of money that can be put into tax-free education savings accounts. Parents are a key component of any education reform, and President Bush realizes that without empowering them, little can be done.

In short, the President's plan provides the right blend of parental empowerment, local flexibility, federal funding, and accountability.

If enacted, this plan will go a long way towards giving every child in America a chance to truly succeed.

There are a lot of issues to be dealt with in the coming days. A good deal of compromise is to be made. But I am extremely excited that our President, President Bush, is leading with this issue. Clearly, there is no question in our country it is a major issue, and a major issue of importance for all of us, but most importantly for the future of our country.

Mr. President, other colleagues have come to the floor and wish to speak, and we are operating under a unanimous consent agreement. So let me, with that, conclude my remarks and, in so doing, say I am excited that we have the opportunity to work together on this issue and to prove to Americans that education is the No. 1 priority of the Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Chair recognizes the Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Arkansas, who has the great name Senator HUTCHINSON.

PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Arkansas for 5 minutes, under the previous order.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. I thank the Chair, and thank the Senator from Texas for her leadership on education, and for having a good name, and for me having a name similar to it.

I applaud President Bush for his commitment to education in unveiling a very serious and comprehensive education reform program today. It is an education package that, if enacted in its entirety, I believe, will ensure that no child in America will be left behind. . . . That should be our goal.

One of the wonderful aspects of what President Bush is now doing is to help us redefine what success is in education. For too long, success has been defined by: How much do we spend? President Bush wants to redefine that as to how much children are learning. That should be the criteria for whether or not we are succeeding in education.

His proposals represent an excellent framework for moving forward, and moving forward quickly, on a bipartisan basis, with legislation in Congress. I call on my colleagues to have an open mind on this education package and allow us to work together to achieve these goals.

Among other things, he seeks to address the problem of failing schools. Federal support, under his plan, will be provided, augmenting State funds, to

help schools that need improvement. States and districts will be expected to implement serious reforms in schools that continue to fail.

All children in America deserve to have the chance for a quality education. In order to achieve that, there must be real consequences for schools that are persistently dangerous or are not improving after serious reform efforts for 3 years.

Under the Bush plan, if a school cannot achieve success in 3 years, with additional help from the Federal Government, then we ought to give those parents the chance to get those children out of the failing school. No child should be left behind because of where he or she lives or because of the financial standing of his or her parents. So I think this is a wonderful hallmark of the Bush plan.

Under the Bush plan, success is rewarded; failure is sanctioned. States, districts, and schools that narrow the achievement gap and improve overall student achievement will be rewarded, and States that fail to make progress may lose a portion of their administrative funds.

If we are to change education in this country, there must be consequences to failure. We must close that gap between the high achieving and the low achieving. That was the goal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Bush plan provides a whole new area of flexibility, much less of the prescriptive, top-down categorical grant programs—over 60 of them—that tie the hands of local educators. The Bush plan would reduce that to a few streams of funds and provide new flexibility for local educators.

As you can tell, Mr. President, I am quite enthused about what we have the opportunity to do for the education of American children. As a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, I look forward to working with President Bush and with my colleagues in the Senate to pass meaningful education legislation.

This issue is a priority. It is President Bush who deserves the credit for making it a priority. It is time to put partisan politics aside and to work to ensure that every child in America receives a quality education, and that no child is left behind.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mrs. HUTCHISON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for up to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair has been and will be very protective of the time on Tuesdays, but since the Senator has been here the entire morning, I will not object.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I know this is a difficult time to be presiding, but I did want to finish the discussion of the

education proposal that is being put forth by President Bush.

We have had several speakers this morning talk about the importance of addressing education as the first priority of our new President, George W. Bush. I think you can tell from the debate that Congress is ready to go on this issue.

We have been looking for accountability and flexibility in the Federal role in education since I came to Congress, and probably since STROM THURMOND came to Congress, because we know the difference between America and most other countries in the world is that we value every child getting a quality education. So we know that public education is the route that every child must take to succeed in life.

If we fall down in public education, we will see the crumbling of the foundation of democracy in America. That is why President Bush is putting this as a first priority, and why Congress is going to work with him to do it.

I think what President Bush is talking about is exactly the right approach—that we are going to give incentives for creativity, for flexibility, that we are going to go for every child to have the best education that we can potentially give that child.

But we are not going to sit back and say that year after year after year, if a public school fails, we are going to keep pouring money into that failing school and leave those children at risk. That is what we are saying. We are saying if a school fails for 3 straight years, we are going to empower parents and school districts and States to say there is an alternative and we are going to let you look at the options and select another alternative for your child.

That is the bottom line of what we are talking about today. So we are going to put a lot more money from the Federal level into public education. We are going to give our schools every chance to succeed, and we are going to help them succeed. But, Mr. President, this is accountability that we are going to put into the system because we are not going to let a child be left behind because all the bureaucrats and the politicians in Washington are talking about accountability but not deciding what it is. We are going to decide in the next few months what it is and we are going to set a standard and we are going to require that standard be kept.

That is what President Bush is doing. Congress is going to work with him to do it. I applaud the President, and I am anxious to work with him to make sure that every child has the ability to reach his or her full potential with a public education in our country.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.